

THE MASTER KEY

By John Fleming Wilson

By special arrangement for this paper a photo-drama corresponding to the installments of "The Master Key" may now be seen at the leading moving picture theaters. By arrangement made with the Universal Film Manufacturing company it is not only possible to read "The Master Key" in this paper, but also afterward to see moving pictures of our story.

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Unhappily for the girl, Everett was called out of town. And so when he found himself forced to make a hurried trip to San Francisco her predicament became the more pronounced.

The false Everett, George Drake, took it upon himself to call at the Ritz for her mail, and, returning with word that there was none for her, Ruth felt a strange premonition that matters were not progressing as they should.

Mrs. Darnell found her gazing out of the drawing room window, huddled in a pathetic little heap, dejection stamped on features and form.

"Dearie," purred the hostess, "you look as if you had lost your last friend on earth. Do cheer up. What is the trouble?"

Ruth turned her head, but remained in the same queer little attitude, replying in a plaintive voice:

"I do not understand why Mr. Dorr has not written or wired me. Really, Mrs. Darnell, I am beginning to fear that something has happened to him."

Mrs. Darnell looked at her searchingly, but recovered quickly under the questioning return gaze.

"Do not worry, Ruth. Everything will come out all right. Supposing we take a drive. The air and sunshine will do you a world of good."

Every minute was one of delight to the unsophisticated girl, and each new sight and vista opened a new world to her inexperienced mind. After a stop at Grant's tomb they speeded downtown, reaching Columbus circle after a run through Central park.

A blowout of one of the tires caused a delay. Ruth tired of sitting in the car, and, jumping out, she spied a florist's window. Before Mrs. Darnell could think of the possibility of a mis-carriage of her well laid plans the girl was inside. She purchased violets for both and was on her way out when she saw a telephone. Intuitively, rather than from any other motive, she hastily called up Mr. Everett's office. To her amazement she learned that he had gone west.

Her news was even more startling to Mrs. Darnell than it had been to Ruth. Quick action was needed, and, leaving Ruth in the car with a prevaricated excuse, the older woman was soon phoning to Drake, telling him to go west at once and instructing him to meet them in San Francisco, where he was to pose as Everett and continue carrying out the plot to secure possession of Ruth's mining property.

And thus it came about that five days later found them in the metropolis of the Pacific coast, where they were met by Drake, still posing as Everett.

The greatest difficulty lay in reconciling Ruth's mind to the mystery of Everett's sudden departure after she had seen him at Mrs. Darnell's the night before. But the cleverness of

After mulling over the problem he felt that he must confide in some one. Of all the men in the mine he trusted only Tom Kane. He strode down the hill to the cook shanty and found the old man engaged in his task of preparing the noonday meal.

"Look here, Tom," John said abruptly, holding out the telegram. "I haven't said anything before, but Ruth is lost in San Francisco. I've wired Everett before. He can't find her."

Without a word the cook reached for the yellow slip and read it slowly. He glanced up and said with the utmost simplicity, "I reckon you'd better catch this evening's express."

"But my work here—somebody has got to look after the mine and Wilkerson!"

Tom Kane glanced at him and then at the bit of paper. "I know how you feel," he muttered, "but I've cooked years enough to know that if you leave

things on the fire they'll burn. This business won't wait." He smiled magnificently. "And you just leave this to me. I've been here since the mine started, and I guess I can attend to it from cook shanty to Wilkerson. The main thing is to find Ruth. I know she's safe, for nobody would hurt that little girl. But you've got to go to Frisco and help her. Likely she's found herself pretty much a stranger. I got lost in New Orleans once, and I reckon Frisco is bigger."

"I'll go," said Dorr promptly. "I'll leave my papers and my new plans in your charge, Tom."

The old man laid his warm hand on John's arm. "New plans?" he whispered. "Have you found the mother lode? Don't say anything to Wilkerson."

"But he is the superintendent?"

"Not of this shanty. I never trust an egg until I've broken it."

In Harry Wilkerson's dark heart there was what he might in his twisted vocabulary have termed happiness. His plans were working out to perfection. Jean Darnell had wired again that all was well and that she would have news for him in a few days. This meant that she and George Drake had done their part. But he wondered why it was that John Dorr, who must certainly be anxiously awaiting word from Ruth, neither said anything nor displayed a sign of impatience.

It did not escape him that Tom Kane and the young engineer were in consultation several times. What were they planning? He determined to probe boldly. When Dorr came into the office in the afternoon and began to clear up his desk Wilkerson asked quietly, "What's the news from San Francisco? Has Ruth wired?"

John had been expecting this perfectly natural question and was ready with his answer:

"Everything seems to be all right."

"Good!" said the superintendent dryly. "I'd like to get started on that new lead pretty soon." He could not repress a sour smile. "Since the old rate of wages has been restored I guess you and I may have to do without our salaries for a while."

John looked up and caught himself. He was in no position to quarrel with this man. "Pay the men first, of course," he said. He proceeded to get into a package of blueprints and memoranda.

"Going to move?" suggested Wilkerson.

"I'm going for a trip, and I thought I'd look over my notes in the meanwhile," was the response.

Wilkerson said no more. He went on to the alert. From Bill Tubbs he learned that Dorr was going to run into either Valle Vista or Silent Valley with the motor truck.

The superintendent of the "Master Key" belonged to the type that is catlike in its quickness of action, based on intuition rather than on reason. While Ruth Gallon was carefully concealed, it was more than possible that Dorr would stir things up with the aid of Everett that all plans to seize control of the mine's stock would be futile. He must not be allowed to go to San Francisco.

[To be Continued Friday]

Something Had Gone Wrong.

Ruth Spied a Florist's Window.



the schemer counterbalanced all doubts, and the girl was therefore persuaded to hasten to San Francisco to carry out her plans.

Accordingly she wired Dorr, but again "the wires crossed" for, although he learned that she was going to the western city, he again learned that Everett had failed to connect with her.

Ruth had been gone many days when John Dorr received another telegram from Everett that made his heart stop its regular beat. Alone in his cabin he pored over it as if there must be some hidden meaning beneath the words. It was unbelievable. After all his pain and his very careful forethought for her comfort and safety something had gone wrong. Everett was brief:

San Francisco, April 2.
John Dorr, Silent Valley, Cal.:
Have been unable to find Miss Gallon.
EVERETT.

For awhile his mind refused to work logically. All that he could think of was little Ruth Gallon, she of the slender hands and pure eyes, lost in the great city and piteously seeking a familiar face. But he pulled himself vigorously together and called up the agent at the station.

"Bill," he said over the telephone. "This is Dorr. I want to get a wire through to San Francisco."

"All right, John; what is it?"

John thought a moment and then dictated this message:

Charles Everett, Call Building, San Francisco:
Miss Gallon was to have gone to the St. Francis, as I wired you before. DORR.

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Prices and Terms Cut Down

WE ARE CUTTING AND SLASHING PIANO PRICES AND TERMS

This New Piano

WAS \$275 NOW \$98

\$2.00 DOWN \$1.00 PER WEEK

FREE Stool, Scarf, Tuning and Delivery

ATTENTION PIANO BUYERS:

To-morrow is the day. This store will be jammed with customers from early morning till late at night. We will cut the prices still further as a final effort to close out this enormous stock. Come here bright and early. Bring a few Dollars along with you. Any advertised price buys a Piano. Glance over the values listed in this paper to-day. Can you resist the temptation to buy? Come in anyway. Look these instruments over. An opportunity like this presents itself about once in a lifetime. This sale is apt to close at any moment. Nothing will prevent us from selling these instruments. Nothing should prevent you from being here. YOU ARE NOT UNDER ANY OBLIGATIONS TO BUY UNLESS YOU SEE THE PIANO YOU WANT.

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The biggest problem you have to contend with to-day is the demoralizing influence of the dance hall and the street congregating crowds. KEEP YOUR BOYS AND GIRLS AT HOME. Give them the proper amusement and entertainment at home and they will not seek it outside. Buy a Piano for them at this great sale. Start them on a musical education now. This act on your part will stand out in their minds as a living monument to you when you are dead and gone. It will probably require some sacrifice on your part. But the deed will justify the act. THERE IS LOGIC AND SENTIMENT IN THIS. THINK IT OVER.

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What became of the money you have earned in the past six months. YOU SPENT IT. SOMEBODY ELSE PUT IT IN THE BANK. Why do you let the other fellow save what you earn? Why don't you invest a part of your earnings in the purchase of a Piano for the promotion of your home comfort and happiness? Why don't you take advantage of this wonderful Piano Sale? Look at the Pianos. The prices and the terms advertised in to-day's paper. We guarantee an actual saving of \$100 on any Piano in our establishment. Pay a few dollars down. We will deliver the Piano into your home immediately. It will become a part of your estate as much as the insurance policy you carry or the home that we hope you own. THINK IT OVER.

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We Will Pay Your Railroad Fare Both Ways If You Purchase Your Piano Here

DEMANDS MADE FOR COAL

By Associated Press
Reading, Dec. 16.—A great and urgent demand for coal set in all along the Reading system to-day because of the cold weather. This was the coldest mercury was down to ten degrees above zero in this city, and along the Blue mountains it was 2 to 5 below zero. Many sections of this county are enjoying excellent sleighing.

GIVES A TAFFY PULL

Miss Grace Sprout Is Hostess to Some of Her Friends
Miss Grace M. Sprout gave a taffy pull at her home, 928 South Twentieth-and-a-half street, with music, dancing and cards among the social diversions. A buffet supper, with candies for the last course, was served to Miss Naomi Michael, Miss Ruth Wieland, Miss Clara Neely, Miss Lillian Stauffer, Miss Grace M. Sprout, Miss Mary E. Wolf, of Shippensburg; Miss Gertrude Manninger, of Reading; Mr. and Mrs. Warren Houdman, Mr. and Mrs. Charles Canning, Thomas Mountain, John Ludt, of Carlisle; Charles E. Sprout, Mr. and Mrs. George B. Sprout, and Master Gilbert E. Sprout.